

PROGRESSIVE PLANNING

The Magazine of Planners Network

New York City's Walls and Bridges



Photo by Tom Angotti

The Steps of New York's City Hall: Closed to the Public

City Planners Realize Windfalls for Developers and Oppose Inclusionary Zoning

By Alex Schafran

New York City's planners are rezoning land left and right to make way for new housing. They refuse to adopt, however, a tried-and-true method of city planning to ensure that some of the new housing goes to meet the dire housing needs of working-class people. That method, inclusionary zoning, mandates or gives incentives to developers so that a certain proportion of new housing units are affordable to people with modest incomes. It has been used successfully all over the country, but the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) proclaims that equity principles have no place in zoning, as they proudly create windfall profits for landowners.

Historically working-class neighborhoods that are getting up-zoned, like Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan and Williamsburg in Brooklyn (Utne Reader calls it the third hippest neighborhood in the country), have been particularly hard-hit by both the overall housing crisis and [\[Cont. on page 7\]](#)

INSIDE:

NEW YORK CITY
SPECIAL:

MANHATTAN
PROJECTS

COMMUNITY
PLANNING

GREEN
BUILDING

WORLD SOCIAL
FORUM

MORE...

The SEVENTH GENERATION

*"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."
- From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy*

Planning in New York City: Walls that Divide, Bridges that Unite

By Tom Angotti

As the preeminent global center of capitalism, New York City thrives on the free flow of capital. But it's not so liberal when it comes to the movement of people. More and more walls are going up that divide people and neighborhoods and restrict freedoms in public space. The city's planners are helping to build these walls, through their actions and inaction.

Since 9/11, fear and gentrification have reinforced the city's historic trends of segregation by class and race. Real estate developers, with the help of city planners, are busy chopping up neighborhoods into thousands of private enclaves - office parks, malls, superstores, gated buildings and exclusive communities. The city's most notable public spaces-its sidewalks-are getting fenced off and restricted by draconian policing and surveillance measures. The most dramatic of these incursions takes place during massive street demonstrations like those planned for the Republic National Convention this August.

The tourist literature describes New York as the most "diverse" city in the world. 60% are people of color, and over a third are foreign-born, representing every nation on the earth. But behind the veneer of ethnic harmony lie gaping inequalities as wide as those to be found throughout the empire whose economic center is arguably here on Wall Street. Record unemployment and homelessness, skyrocketing housing costs, shrinking public services, racial profiling, epidemics of HIV/AIDS, asthma and tuberculosis in communities of color. These are as much a part of the reality in New York City as glitzy Times Square, artsy Soho, and snooty Rockefeller Center. New York City looks a lot like the rest of the world. The balance of economic and political power still rests with the minority of European descent who keep a tight grip on the reins.

Bloomberg's Master Plans

Michael Bloomberg, Gotham's billionaire mayor since 2000, is the 29th richest man in the country. He is commander-in-chief of a new downtown development boom reminiscent of the bad old days of Robert Moses. Through his energetic Deputy Mayor Daniel Doctoroff, the mayor has issued several gargantuan master plans. These are based on a pro-growth economic development philosophy that sees new offices and apartments automatically meeting the needs for jobs and housing, though they will likely go to the upper strata who, after all, need them the least. The rezoning schemes that follow these plans will push out good industrial jobs and jack up rents in surrounding areas, resulting in net losses for working class people.

Bloomberg's ambitious strategy includes dumping ten million square feet of office space on the World Trade Center site, rezoning Hells Kitchen/Clinton on the west side of Manhattan for another 28 million square feet, and squeezing ten million square feet into downtown Brooklyn. Never mind that there is already fifty million square feet of vacant office space in the city. Tens of thousands of new apartments, mostly built for the high end of the market, will accompany the office towers so that executives and their families will be able to walk to work, while most of us will be stuck on the increasingly crowded and costly mass transit system. As more working people are forced to move further and further away from these new luxury enclaves to find affordable housing, the city will look more and more like a disjointed amalgamation of separate enclaves.

The real question New Yorkers have to face is not how many jobs and how many housing units will new real estate deals create but what kind of city do we want? The city's planners have allowed the public dialogue to be about whether or not there should be another fifty million square feet of office space, not about how the city can create and maintain healthy and viable neighborhoods. What kind of economic [Cont. on page 24]

PROGRESSIVE PLANNING

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Hunter College Dept of Urban
Planning, 695 Park Ave.
New York, NY 10021
http://www.plannersnetwork.org
email: tangotti@hunter.cuny.edu
Ph: 212-650-3130 Fx: 212-772-5593
MEMBERSHIP OFFICE
379 DeKalb Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11205
Ph: 718-636-3461 Fx: 718-636-3709

EDITORS
Tom Angotti and Ann Forsyth
EDITORIAL BOARD
Eve Baron, Kara Heffernan,
Norma Rantisi
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Fernando Marti, Katharine Rankin,
Alejandro Rofman, Arturo Sanchez
LAYOUT
Donovan Finn
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Eugene J. Patron

Progressive Planning is published quarterly by Planners Network, Inc., a non-profit corporation in the State of New York. Copyright 2003 by Planners Network. Reprinting and distribution of portions of this magazine for non-commercial purposes are encouraged. Reprints for commercial purposes require written permission from the publisher. Progressive Planning is indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

STEERING COMMITTEE
Richard Milgrom, Co-Chair, Ayse Yonder, Co-Chair, Tom Angotti, Ann Forsyth, Josh Lerner, Fernando Marti, Norma Rantisi, Ken Reardon

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Chester Hartman, Chair, Teresa Córdova, Dana R. Driskell, Marie Kennedy, Patricia Nolan, Arturo Sanchez, Peg Seip, Ruth Yabes

Statement of Principles

The Planners Network is an association of professionals, activists, academics, and students involved in physical, social, economic, and environmental planning in urban and rural areas, who promote fundamental change in our political and economic systems. We believe that planning should be a tool for allocating resources and developing the environment to eliminate the great inequalities of wealth and power in our society, rather than to maintain and justify the status quo. We are committed to opposing racial, economic, and environmental injustice, and discrimination by gender and sexual orientation. We believe that planning should be used to assure adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, jobs, safe working conditions, and a healthful environment. We advocate public responsibility for meeting these needs, because the private market has proven incapable of doing so.

PROGRESSIVE PLANNING

The Magazine of Planners Network

No. 159

www.plannersnetwork.org

Spring 2004

NEW YORK FEATURES:

City Planners Realize Windfalls for Developers and Oppose Inclusionary Zoning <i>Alex Schafman</i>	1
7th Generation <i>Tom Angotti</i>	2
Planning for All New Yorkers: The Campaign for Community-Based Planning <i>Eve Baron</i>	4
Olympic Glory or Fool's Gold?: New Yorkers Boo Stadium & Midtown Plan <i>Eugene J. Patron</i>	10
Lower Manhattan after 9/11: Where's the Planning, Where's the Money? <i>Peter Marcuse</i>	13
Greening New York, One Building at a Time <i>Bomee Jung</i>	15
Mapping the Way to Community-Based Planning	17
Bush To City: Drop Dead <i>Jack Newfield</i>	18
Deporting the "Bad" Immigrant <i>Mark Winston Griffith</i>	22

FEATURES:

Another World Is Possible: The World Social Forum in Mumbai <i>Theresa Williamson</i>	22
Advocacy in the New Melting Pot: Reports from CA & ME <i>Pierre Clavel and Neema Kudva</i>	25
Tierras Públicas y Apropiación Privada <i>Alejandro Rofman</i>	28
Book Review: How East New York Became a Ghetto <i>Review By Lew Lubka</i>	30

DEPARTMENTS

Planners Network Updates	34
Resources: Jobs, Events, Publications	36
How To Join, Purchase Back Issues, etc.	39

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Progressive Planning seeks articles that describe and analyze progressive physical, social, economic and environmental planning in urban and rural areas. Articles may be up to 2,000 words. They should be addressed to PN's broad audience of professionals, activists, students and academics, and be straightforward and jargon-free. Following a journalistic style, the first paragraph should summarize the main ideas in the article. A few suggested readings may be mentioned in the text, but do not submit footnotes or a bibliography. The editors may make minor style changes, but any substantial rewriting or changes will be checked with the author. A photograph or illustration may be included. Submissions on disk or by email are greatly appreciated. Send to the Editor at tangotti@hunter.cuny.edu or Planners Network, c/o Hunter College Dept of Urban Planning, 695 Park Ave., New York, NY 10021. Fax: 212-772-5593. Deadlines are January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1.

Upcoming Topics (articles welcome):

PN Conference Issue
Olympic Cities

7th Generation [cont. from page 2]

activities will occupy the old and new commercial space? Will it be the parasitical Wall Street firms that thrive by trading, or stealing, other people's hard-earned money? Or will it be for a diverse local economy that actually produces something of value to people? Who will live in the new apartments? Will they be affordable to anyone who actually has to work for a living?

The Un-Giuliani

One of the most common compliments heard about Bloomberg is that he's not Rudy Giuliani, who preceded Bloomberg as mayor for eight years and was one of the most divisive and racially insensitive (to be kind) mayors in recent history. Giuliani unleashed police in communities of color where racial profiling was standard practice and cops killed unarmed people, including children. Giuliani's authoritarian style also killed a lot of innovation in city government (though there were some notable exceptions that went under his radar). People and organizations on his hit list were threatened and reviled. Communities of color couldn't even get up the steps of City Hall (he banned demonstrations there except for rallies by his pals) much less into the mayor's office.

Michael Bloomberg, on the other hand, is courteous and listens. He changed the climate around City Hall to one of relative openness, and immediately engaged in discussions with African American leaders who Giuliani refused to even meet with. He's been kinder and more fair in cutting up the budget pie (though in part this is due to the new and more progressive City Council). But his priority is still to do the right thing for business. His giant development plans bring smiles to the bank and real estate moguls that Bloomberg rubs elbows with at black tie dinners. To those of us who remember life before Giuliani, it's back to the usual corporate plutocracy. A new day isn't dawning yet.

But what has Bloomberg done with the capital he earned among those battered by the previous mayor? Not much. He got control of the school system, previously run by an independent board. But he's shaped the new educational system like a corporation. A recent sweetheart deal with Snapple to sell their product in the schools would indicate that the ruling philosophy is "no corporate friend of the mayor left behind." In a sign that he's prepared to use weapons from the Giuliani arsenal, Bloomberg recently fired three of his appointees to the city's educational advisory panel because they went against his rigid edict aimed at eliminating "social promotion."

The Compliant City Planning Department

The Department of City Planning (DCP) has been a dutiful servant of Bloomberg's downtown strategies. They churn out rezoning proposals without any rigorous comprehensive planning or partnership with community based organizations. They've abandoned Giuliani's outright contempt for the city's 59 community boards, but their new approach includes consultation without giving neighborhoods any real, meaningful role in decision making. For example, the neighborhoods of Greenpoint and Williamsburg in Brooklyn spent years completing their own community plans, with marginal support by DCP. These plans were approved by the City Planning Commission and City Council in December 2001. Today, DCP is pushing a rezoning of these neighborhoods that openly violates the planning principles established in the community plans. The community plans call for mixed use development and affordable housing, but DCP is advancing a rezoning that will make both virtually impossible. DCP is willing to meet with community groups and leaders, but it is clear that in the end they are going to do what they and the mayor want. Can this be called participatory planning?

A more substantive problem with DCP is that they refuse to support inclusionary zoning. In an amazingly blatant distortion of the truth and violation of professional ethics, department representatives go around saying that inclusionary zoning doesn't work and that zoning shouldn't be used to make social policy. Yet their massive downtown upzonings include abundant opportunities for overnight windfall profits to landowners and developers—profits that, due to a biased social policy, never make their way back into the public sector that created them. At the same time, the department is working overtime in its campaign for low-density contextual zoning in outlying upper class neighborhoods. These downzonings are welcomed by advocates of exclusion because they help keep out affordable housing and the working people who would live in that housing.

The Bridges

There is hope for New York. We have a long legacy of struggle by people organized in associations, unions and communities. For the past century, we've had one of the largest and most dynamic tenant and community movements. New York City was always a center for a strong labor movement and socialist and communist parties. During the Depression, unemployed councils blocked evictions. New York City was a model for a strong public sector and public works during

the New Deal. In the 1950s and 1960s, in tandem with the civil rights movement, neighborhoods fought many battles against the urban renewal bulldozer. As a result of this dynamic history, New York City has the nation's largest stock of public housing, cooperative housing, municipally-owned housing, and mutual housing; a large public hospital system; and a 24-campus city university. As a result of organized labor and communities, these institutions have been mostly saved from the neo-liberal privatization schemes of the last three decades.

Not known to most people are the city's impressive grass roots achievements in community planning. In 1959, the first major community plan was born in the Lower East Side (in Manhattan) when a group of activists stopped the Robert Moses urban renewal project that would have destroyed 12 blocks and displaced thousands. Frances Goldin, Esther Rand, and Thelma Burdick formed the core of a determined group that demonstrated, organized, and launched their own plan. After extensive community participation, the first Cooper Square Plan was prepared in 1961 under the direction of Walter Thabit, founder of Planners for Equal Opportunity, a national organization of advocacy planners that was Planners Network's predecessor. In more than forty years of struggle and determined advocacy, Cooper Square has overseen the preservation and development of a large stock of low-income housing, enough to slow down the gentrification process in this historic working class neighborhood. Sixty percent of the housing units they have supported in the Cooper Square area are for people with low and very low incomes. Their Mutual Housing Association and land trust provide security of tenure for tenants at a time when rents and real estate values are going off the charts and many affordable units are being converted to market rents.

There are many more dramatic stories of grass roots planning. The Planning Center of the Municipal Art Society recently catalogued over 70 community plans in New York City. Many emerged from local struggles to save neighborhoods and avert displacement. All of them were done with minimal support by the city. Three years ago, members of community based organizations, civic organizations, community boards (the city's official body for neighborhood-level decision making) and professionals formed the Task Force on Community-based Planning in an effort to get the city to treat them as partners in land use planning. The Task Force continues to lobby elected officials and city agencies to bring about a change in the city's planning policies.

Environment and Environmental Justice

In recent years, one of the most important supporters of community planning has been the environmental justice movement. While corporate real estate developers take over every inch of developable property, industrially-zoned land in and near working class neighborhoods and communities of color is a target for waste transfer stations, sewage plants, bus garages and noxious industries. The city's planners, unable or unwilling to confront the inherent racism of such an unbalanced land use pattern, are making things worse by refusing to establish regulations that insure every neighborhood will have its fair share of such facilities. Instead, they perpetuate this pattern by protecting wealthy enclaves from what they love to call "inappropriate" development and refusing to impose restrictions in poor neighborhoods.

One of the major planning challenges facing New York City is its chaotic and unjust transportation system. To its credit, DCP advances innovations like traffic calming, bicycle lanes and greenways. But policy is mostly determined by the city's Department of Transportation (DOT), which is single-mindedly dedicated to the objective of moving as many automobiles through the city streets as quickly as possible. As a result, New York remains in violation of the nation's clear air regulations. The other major policy maker is the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, a state-run agency that strongly favors its suburban commuters and runs buses that are major polluters and forever stuck in traffic because DOT won't reduce the number of autos. Transportation Alternatives and Straphangers Campaign are leaders among the many civic and community groups demanding that city policy be balanced and serve the needs of the vast majority of people who walk and who would bike, not the small minority who ride their SUVs to work or to see a Broadway show.

Another challenge that planners have failed to meet is addressing the needs of communities with new immigrants. The foreign-born and first generation immigrants are not adequately represented in the city's decision making bodies. For example, there are three large Chinatowns in New York City but for the first time ever one of them finally has a representative in the City Council. Many new immigrant communities maintain close ties to their countries of origin and are loosely connected to their neighborhoods. Many feel intimidated by the post-9/11 climate of fear and renewed racism, and reluctant to engage in any dialogue that might involve government. In this environment, how can there be an effective partnership for community planning?